Business Plan
2016–2017

Human Rights Commission

NOVA SCOTIA

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Message from the Director and CEO

I am pleased to share the details of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission's (**NSHRC**) Annual Business Plan for the 2016-17 fiscal year. As the agency responsible for enforcing and promoting human rights in Nova Scotia, we have a considerable responsibility to all Nova Scotians. This business plan will help Nova Scotians understand our priorities and will also help track our progress towards meeting those priorities.

The NSHRC maintains a commitment to service excellence and the application of best practices in the protection and promotion of human rights in Nova Scotia. Through the application of restorative approaches to dispute resolution, the NSHRC has created new opportunities to better align our education efforts with the needs of the province's diverse communities.

This is a transition year for NSHRC. I will be working with staff, Commissioners, our strategic partners and members of the public on a plan for NSHRC to guide us in the years to come. The NSHRC will celebrate its 50th year anniversary in 2017 and a number of initiatives are being planned for this important milestone year. We will continue to work on initiatives such as the Community Conversations and Consumer Equity programs. Both initiatives represent responses to priority issues of systemic discrimination that warranted deliberate engagement. One is the result of a Board of Inquiry decision and the other is seeking to build upon the NSHRC's research on Consumer Racial Profiling. These partnerships with community and business leaders represent important relationships that help to give the *Human Rights Act* meaning in the daily lives of Nova Scotians.

My sincere thanks go to the staff, management and Commissioners for their commitment and hard work to ensure the best possible service to the public throughout this period.

Mandate

NSHRC has a unique role within Nova Scotia. It is an independent government agency charged with administering the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*, a provincial statute created in 1969, with the most recent amendments in December 2012. The NSHRC is mandated by the *Human Rights Act* (the ***Act***) to help build inclusive communities and protect human rights in Nova Scotia.

The specific duties of NSHRC are set out in the Act. NSHRC has the responsibility of administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act. In addition, it develops programs of public information and education in the field of human rights to forward the principle that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights without regard to race, religion, creed, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. Furthermore, it is mandated to conduct research and encourage research by universities and other bodies in the general field of human rights.

NSHRC also works with government by advising and assisting government departments and agencies involving human rights. It reports, as required, to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice on the business and activities of NSHRC and considers, investigates or administers any matter or activity referred to it by the Governor in Council or the Minister of Justice.

Government Priorities

The Government of Nova Scotia has three overarching goals: People, Innovation and Education. While the NSHRC is an independent agency of Government, it seeks to align its priorities with these goals. The work of the NSHRC falls under the first priority: People.

NSHRC's link to Government's Priority: People

NSHRC helps Nova Scotians resolve disputes involving discrimination and harassment, and provides education and training to community members, organizations and employers throughout the province. NSHRC is committed to creating a just and inclusive Nova Scotia.

Outcome: Nova Scotia's population is growing, productive and thriving.

Goals:

1. Enhance workforce participation of youth, older workers and marginalized communities.

2. Improve communities and social well-being.

Actions:

- NSHRC will continue its outreach to communities that have historically faced discrimination in Nova Scotia through our "Community Conversations" project. This initiative is an opportunity to meet with Nova Scotians who experience discrimination in their communities and engage with them in conversations about the issues at the root of those experiences. This initiative has its origin in a case brought to NSHRC by the Halifax Association of Black Firefighters and was expanded to include the following communities: African Nova Scotians, the immigrant community, our First Nations and Indigenous community, LGBTQI community, and people with disabilities. It is hoped that these conversations will lead to the identification of opportunities to improve human rights and mobilization of efforts to bring about positive change in communities across Nova Scotia.

- The development of a database containing an annotated bibliography of research on human rights protected characteristics.

- Provide accessible education to the public on human rights to promote a more just and inclusive Nova Scotia.

Inputs:

Over the 2015-16 fiscal year, funding was allocated to complete research, hold meetings with key community stakeholders and build capacity within NSHRC to facilitate future community conversations. It is anticipated that NSHRC will absorb future facilitation of these on-going community conversations within its existing operational budget.

Performance Measures:

- Increase in the number of human rights training sessions being requested and delivered to employers.
- Increase in the number of human rights complaints that are resolved through dialogue and restorative approaches.
- A Human Rights Commission that is more engaged, accessible and involved in the community.

Core Responsibilities and Services

#1

Outcome: Communities within Nova Scotia are more inclusive

Goals: Meaningfully engage, educate and support people and communities to raise awareness and address issues of systemic discrimination

Actions:

Proactive, strategic stakeholder engagement

1. NSHRC will focus efforts on proactive, strategic stakeholder engagement and relationship building to strengthen connections with our key stakeholders.

Strategic partnerships and collaboration

2. NSHRC will work with ongoing partners for human rights and identify new strategic partnership opportunities to advance our mandate, including the exploration of a human rights educational partnership with the Department of Education.

3. NSHRC will continue our role as a key partner in the annual Symposium for Inclusive Education and Employment.

4. NSHRC will continue as co-chair of the Partners for Human Rights committee made up of individuals, organizations and community groups dedicated to advancing human rights.

Support for Commissioners

5. NSHRC will develop a plan to enhance engagement and participation of the Commissioners.

Community Conversations Initiative

6. NSHRC will continue work on the Community Conversations initiative, focusing on research, communications and engagement activities within our communities.

Inputs:

NSHRC will work within its existing budget and staffing compliment to achieve this priority and complete the required actions. We will engage and continue to work with our community partners, stakeholders and other government departments and agencies to achieve the outcome.

Performance Measures:

- The membership of NSHRC will reflect the diversity of communities throughout Nova Scotia.

- Community Conversations events will be held in up to five distinct communities across Nova Scotia in 2017-18.

#2

Outcome: **NSHRC** will be known provincially as a leader and innovator in the protection and promotion of human rights

Goal: NSHRC will demonstrate leadership in the protection of human rights through innovation and the use of best practices.

Actions:

Review and improve internal processes

1. NSHRC will continue to refine its dispute resolution processes and identify and act on efficiencies in its delivery of services.

2. NSHRC will continue to monitor processing times for complaints and board of inquiry hearings to ensure a timely resolution of all matters.

Sharing best practices with our partners and the local restorative learning community

3. NSHRC will maintain efforts to protect human rights by the sharing of best practices and knowledge relevant to our ongoing Partners for Human Rights committee.

4. NSHRC will continue to participate on relevant Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Associations (CASHRA) working groups with colleagues across the country.

Reducing consumer racial profiling

5. NSHRC will sustain work on the consumer equity project, and continue efforts to prevent consumer racial profiling through education and operationalizing recommendations contained in *Working Together to Better Serve All Nova Scotians* (the consumer racial profiling research report).

Evaluation of Dispute Resolution Practices

6. NSHRC will implement an evaluation framework for dispute resolution, and apply a restorative lens when using the framework.

Review the *Human Rights Act*

7. Working with the Department of Justice, NSHRC will review the *Human Rights Act* to understand where amendments may be required to allow for improvements to the process of dispute resolution and adjudication of complaints.

Input:

We are continuing to work toward an improved and more effective implementation of the restorative approach to human rights complaint resolution. As the benefits of this model continue to be realized, NSHRC will be able to better use its human resources to focus on the education and training needs component of its mandate.

Performance Measures:

- NSHRC will continue to ensure that investigations of complaints are completed within one year of referral.
- NSHRC will offer up to four free human rights education sessions throughout the province in the 2016-17 fiscal year.
- NSHRC will participate in a minimum of ten (10) workshops, presentations and/or information sessions in the 2016-17 fiscal year.

#3

Outcome: NSHRC is a preferred place of employment within the network of provincial department and agencies.

Goals: NSHRC is a respectful workplace that is dynamic, embraces differences and fosters continuous learning.

Actions:

Create and sustain a workplace of excellence

1. NSHRC will continue to focus on activities that will enhance our overall organizational development.

Support for staff

2. NSHRC will invest in technology enhancements and improvements to internal communications, including the development of an intranet website.
3. NSHRC will operationalize the staff orientation manual.
4. NSHRC staff will participate in regular learning opportunities and information sharing sessions.
5. NSHRC will create a workplace wellness committee to be chaired by the CEO.

Learning organization

6. NSHRC will create and implement a plan to become an organization that demonstrates a commitment to continuous learning.

Inputs:

NSHRC will work within its existing budget and staffing compliment to achieve this priority and complete the required actions. NSHRC will work with the Public Service Commission to capitalize on existing training and learning opportunities, and support for a healthy workplace.

Performance Measures:

- All management staff will complete "Working Mind" training program and all staff will be offered opportunity to attend session by March 31, 2017.
- Increased employee engagement and satisfaction in 2017-18 "How's Work Going" Survey.
- Increased understanding by all staff of the various roles and responsibilities within NSHRC.
- NSHRC will hold at least eight (8) monthly training sessions for staff on issues including human rights education, complaints adjudication and healthy workplace practices.

Departmental Expenses Summary
($ thousands)

Programs and Services	2015-2016 Estimate	2015-2016 Forecast	2016-2017 Estimate
Administration	834	1,075	889
Support Services	1,698	1,457	1,643
Total - Departmental Expenses	2,532	2,532	2,532
Ordinary Recoveries	—	—	—
Funded Staff (# of FTEs)			
Department Funded Staff	24.5	20.0	24.5